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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL

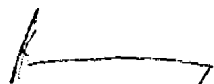
March 31, 1971

Dear Ray:

Thank you for providing me your thoughts on both the WSAG meetings on the LAMSON operation and on the need for a more systematic approach to net assessments. As you point out, the question is the best way of drawing upon the resources available to the U. S. Government in reaching policy decisions. Of course, this has been and continues to be a major consideration in the functioning of the current NSC process.

I am sure we will continue to grapple with this and other such problems as we go along and I appreciate receiving your views.

Warm regards,

  
Henry A. Kissinger

MORI/CDF C05080410

Dr. Ray S. Cline  
Director of Intelligence and Research  
Department of State

NSS, DOS Reviews Completed.

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March 26, 1971

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MEMORANDUM FOR: HENRY KISSINGER

FROM: Tom Latimer

SUBJECT: Ray Cline Letter to you on Laos Logistics

Ray Cline has written you giving his reaction to the two WSAG meetings on the Laos logistics problem. (Tab A) He states that he was disturbed "by the fact that none of you great men on the WSAG seem to have done this homework before (his emphasis) rather than after the decision was reached to launch the Route 9 operation. "

His purpose in writing to you has to do with the proper use of intelligence in arriving at important decisions. In sum, he does not believe you are drawing fully on the intelligence resources available "to make a coherent assessment" of the probable developments that would result from various alternative courses of action under study by the NSC. He has attached a memorandum he prepared for the Under Secretary on exploiting intelligence staffs for decision making. (Tab B)

The essence of Cline's memorandum is a recommendation for systematic preparation of "net assessments," i. e. studies which arrive at judgments comparing American forces with hostile forces. He notes that NIE's generally assess only foreign forces and developments and he quotes Director Helms to the effect that he does not have the authority to prepare net assessments.

In conclusion, Ray Cline advocates the creation of a new NSC Subcommittee something like the Net Evaluation Subcommittee of the early Kennedy years.

You are, of course, now receiving net assessments on specific problems where it is deemed useful, including the LAMSON Operation. It may be, as Cline states, that INR was not asked for its views prior to the initiation of LAMSON but State was and made its contribution in the WSAG.

-- The proposal for establishing a formal NSC subcommittee to systematically prepare net assessments has some merit but the same goal could be achieved either by continuing the present

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ad hoc procedure via the WSAG or, where pertinent, by instructing Director Helms to include such assessments in key NIE's such as the one on Soviet Intercontinental Attack Forces.

At Tab C is a note from you to Ray Cline acknowledging the receipt of his letter.

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TL:igd:3/26/71

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH  
WASHINGTON

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March 24, 1971

Dear Henry:

It was very enlightening--not to say amusing--to attend the two recent WASAG meetings on the logistics systems in Laos and the impact of military operations in the Route 9 area.

I confess that I was somewhat frustrated during the discussion, because I felt that the "adversary proceedings" between CIA and DIA prevented the orderly description of the intelligence system involved and an estimate of what it could or could not do in the way of quantification. It seemed to me that about 20 minutes of straightforward exposition would have clarified things so that you need not have spent four hours on it. Since I am familiar with the wayward behavior of interagency committees, these proceedings did not dismay me at all, and certainly it is better to go deeply into things like this than to let them drift on in vagueness.

I was disturbed, however, by the fact that none of you great men on the WASAG seem to have done this homework before rather than after the decision was reached to launch the Route 9 (LAMSON) operation. I was not consulted in advance on the wisdom of the operation by anyone, so I have no personal stake in proving the decision right or wrong. In fact, I think it was a good decision and I believe the LAMSON operation will prove to have been "successful" in the context of the real military possibilities in Laos.

The point I am writing to you about is a rather abstract one having to do with the proper use of intelligence in arriving at important decisions. It does not appear to me that you are drawing fully on the intelligence resources available to you to make a coherent assessment of probable developments that would result from various alternative courses of action under study by the National Security Council. This problem is inherently yours, and my interest in it is merely to make you and the U.S. Government look as good as possible in reaching sound decisions and--perhaps equally important--in explaining them once they have been made. For your personal information only, to elucidate my main point further, I am attaching a

Mr. Henry Kissinger,  
Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs,  
The White House.

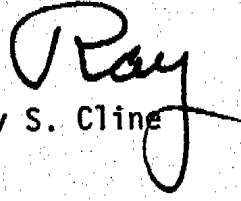
PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

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memorandum on exploiting intelligence staffs for decision-making within the framework of the State Department's operating procedures. It also touches on NSC staff work, and I think you will find the principles are relevant to such matters as estimating in advance the likely impact of an operation like LAMSON. I do think these matters are too important to be left exclusively to the military planners.

Sincerely,

  
Ray S. Cline

Attachment:

Memorandum on Net Assessments  
(SECRET ATTACHMENT)

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

MEMORANDUM

March 8, 1971

To : The Under Secretary  
Through : S/S  
From : INR - Ray S. Cline *(RSC)*  
Subject : Factors in Making a Net Assessment of US and Soviet  
Strategic Forces - INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

This memorandum is in response to your request to INR Deputy Director Len Weiss for a discussion of the factors involved in making a net assessment of US and Soviet forces.

In the intelligence and research community the term "net assessment" is used to refer to a study which arrives at a judgment comparing American forces with hostile or potentially hostile foreign forces. It might describe the relationship between existing Soviet and US forces and also the likely development of future Soviet forces as a consequence of the Soviet perception of US force programs and policies.

Net assessments need not be limited to the military sphere. They are also applicable to political and economic problems. Thus, for example, a net assessment of the Middle East situation would take into account the interaction of the policies and courses of action pursued by the principal powers involved, including the United States. The key distinction involved is between an intelligence "estimate," which traditionally deals only with foreign forces and developments, and a study which relates these matters specifically to American strengths, weaknesses and courses of action.

In our view, such net assessments of Soviet and American strategic offensive and defensive forces (as well as of other situations) are a valuable analytical tool to assist in making policy and program decisions. Yet there is no systematic preparation of such evaluations, nor is there an existing institutional framework within which the several interested agencies and Departments, with their differing interests and points of view, can regularly work to prepare such assessments.

FORMAT AND SUBSTANCE

In the military sphere the net assessment should be an annual, companion document to the major National Intelligence Estimates (NIE's)

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on Soviet military forces. It would, therefore, require a discussion of US forces similar to those of Soviet forces in the NIE's. Strategic offensive and defensive forces, intercontinental and certain peripheral strategic forces would have to be considered together. For example, the SS-9 ICBM and US ABM's ought to be considered together, while US ICBM's and the Soviet ABM would also have to be considered, thus making this aspect of the net assessment four dimensional.

The net assessment, if done in this manner, would avoid reaching specific policy conclusions, leaving that to another and higher stage of decision-making. It would, however, highlight critical elements in the balance of forces.

In addition, the net assessment, as noted above, should consider the likely inter-action of planned or estimated future force levels. Such a study might point out opportunities and dangers implicit in projected courses of action, and also suggest alternatives. Such assessments of future inter-actions would be speculative, especially if projected over any length of time. Yet they are at the heart of any effort to analyze realistically such matters as a spiralling arms race. The policy decisions on correct courses of United States action, as I have said, would not be made in the net assessment itself, but left for consideration and action elsewhere.

#### PAST AND CURRENT PRACTICES

Net assessments of military forces have been attempted over the years. In the 1950's a JCS-CIA joint team was set up for this purpose. During the early part of the Kennedy Administration there was a Net Evaluation Subcommittee in the NSC. Later Secretary McNamara tended to gather this function into the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Components of the Department of Defense, such as JCS or an individual command such as SAC also prepare net assessments for their own use. Lately, some net assessments have been made under general NSC auspices either in the DPRC, the Verification Panel or in various NSSM's.

As of now, there is no one locus in the DOD responsible for making authoritative net assessments. There is likewise no established procedure in the Department of State for cranking in political and economic factors in net assessments of broad military developments or complex international conflicts. In some respects the NSSM process and the work of the DPRC and the Verification Panel perform this function, but in these cases net assessments are made irregularly and in response to specific problems at hand, rather than systematically.

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NIE's AND NET ASSESSMENTS

In NIE 11-8-70, on Soviet Intercontinental Attack Forces, the Intelligence Community came close to making a net assessment, or, more accurately, a series of net assessments on specific questions. For example, in describing Soviet capabilities against Minuteman silos, account had to be taken of the hardness of those silos. On a more general plane, it was noted that future Soviet force levels probably would depend in large measure on US force levels. Three illustrative US forces were described, and the possible Soviet reaction to each was considered.

Nevertheless, the NIE is not a true net assessment. In fact, this was noted by USIB when it considered the estimate, and Mr. Helms indicated some sympathy with the view that a net assessment, that is, a detailed comparison and evaluation of US and Soviet strategic attack and defense forces, would be more useful to top policy makers than just a detailed discussion of Soviet forces. He noted, however, that he, as the Director of Central Intelligence and Chairman of USIB, does not have the authority to prepare such a study.

THE PROPER FORUM

The need, therefore, is to select a proper forum, adequately reflecting inter-agency interests, for preparing on a regular, systematic basis objective net assessments on which policy and program decisions can be made. For its own part, the Department of State should establish machinery (involving S/PC and INR mainly, but drawing in expertise from all Bureaus) to make net assessments on all foreign policy problems.

In my view, the best inter-agency forum would be a new NSC Committee, something like the old Net Evaluation Subcommittee of the NSC. The group would be separate from and independent of other NSC Committees, and would be responsible solely for preparing net assessments. It would be similar to the Office of National Estimates in the intelligence field and would work closely with it. It would be shielded as much as possible from pressure from policy and/or operational offices, and it would be staffed by career professionals from the several agencies which would take part in the net assessment process.

CONCLUSIONS

The expanded Soviet military NIE's have taken on some of the characteristics of net assessments of Soviet and US forces, but they

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are not true, comprehensive net assessments. The current strategic balance, the cost of modern strategic weapons systems and the ramifications--military, political and economic--of modern strategic weapons deployments, such as the Safeguard ABM, require that annual, objective over-all net assessments of US and Soviet strategic forces be prepared to assist top policy makers in making decisions in this area. This is necessary because of the inter-action and relationship of US and Soviet strategic weapons developments. These studies should be carried out by an appropriate inter-agency group, should describe and evaluate the existing balance of US and Soviet strategic offensive and defensive forces and should consider likely future developments on both sides. Finally, the annual net assessment of strategic forces should point out for the President and his chief advisors the major issues surfaced by the net assessment and alternative likely courses of action. The Department of State should tool up to support this process by establishing systematic net assessment machinery and procedures inside the Department, and should for its own purposes develop a net assessment program to study complex foreign policy issues involving inter-action among a number of nations all reacting to American policies and courses of action. All of this is intended to give us a more systematic way of analyzing where we are and what is likely to happen in foreign affairs before we try to decide what to do about it.

#### RECOMMENDATION

After you have had a chance to think about this matter, I believe it would be useful to discuss it with you. (We have not discussed our ideas much outside INR.) If you agree that it would be desirable to have such net assessments, we can consider further how best to go about setting up a system to make them.

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